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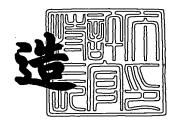
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【プルーフの要否】

要

【書類名】 明細書

【発明の名称】 磁気記録媒体及び磁気記録装置

【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と;

強磁性材料から形成され、記録層の磁化を安定化させる磁化安定化層と;

上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間に存在する非磁性層と;

上記非磁性層と記録層の間並びに非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在し、上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を増大するエンハンス層とを含む磁気記録媒体。

【請求項2】 上記エンハンス層が、Co、Ni、Fe及びCoNiFe合金からなる群から選ばれた一種から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項1に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項3】 上記エンハンス層が、Co、NiまたはFeと遷移金属との合金から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項1に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項4】 上記記録層または上記磁化安定化層がCo、NiまたはFeを含む材料から形成されており、上記エンハンス層は記録層または上記磁化安定化層よりも高濃度のCo、NiまたはFeを含む材料から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項1に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項5】 上記エンハンス層が、上記非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間に存在する第1エンハンス層と、上記非磁性層と記録層の間に存在する第2エンハンス層とを含むことを特徴とする請求項1~4のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項6】 上記エンハンス層が、0.5~3nmの膜厚を有することを 特徴とする請求項1~5のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項7】 上記非磁性層が、Ruから形成されていることを特徴とする 請求項1~6のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項8】 上記磁化安定化層が第1及び第2磁化安定化層を含み、上記 非磁性層が第1及び第2非磁性層を含み、第1非磁性層は第1磁化安定化層と第 2磁化安定化層の間に形成され、第2非磁性層は第2磁化安定化層と記録層との間に形成されており、上記エンハンス層が第2非磁性層と記録層の間並びに第2 非磁性層と第2磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在し、第1磁化安定化層 と第1非磁性層の間並びに第1非磁性層と第2磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一 方に第1磁化安定化層と第2磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を増大する補助エン ハンス層を備える請求項1~7のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項9】 上記補助エンハンス層が、第1非磁性層及び第1磁化安定化層の間に形成された第1補助エンハンス層と;第1非磁性層及び第2磁化安定化層の間に形成された第2補助エンハンス層と;を含む請求項8に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項10】 さらに、下地層が形成された基板を備え、該下地層上に、上記磁化安定化層を備えることを特徴とする請求項1~9のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項11】 磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と:

強磁性材料から形成され、記録層の磁化を安定化させる磁化安定化層と;

上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間に存在する非磁性層と;を備え、

上記磁気記録媒体の外部磁界に対する磁化曲線がヒステリシスループを示し、 磁化を飽和させた後に外部磁界を低下させたときに、外部磁界に対する磁化の変 化率が極大を示す点が正の外部磁界の領域に存在し、且つ磁化曲線から求めた交 換結合磁界が1kOe以上であることを特徴とする磁気記録媒体。

【請求項12】 さらに、上記非磁性層と記録層の間並びに非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在し、上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を増大するエンハンス層を含むことを特徴とする請求項11に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項13】 上記記録層及び磁化安定化層がCo、NiまたはFeを含み、エンハンス層がCo、NiまたはFeから形成されていることを特徴とする請求項11または12に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項14】 上記記録層が面内方向の磁化を有する請求項1または11

に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項15】 請求項1または11に記載の磁気記録媒体と;

上記磁気記録媒体に情報を記録又は再生するための磁気ヘッドと;

上記磁気記録媒体を上記磁気ヘッドに対して駆動するための駆動装置と;を含む 磁気記録装置。

【発明の詳細な説明】

[0001]

【発明の属する技術分野】

本発明は、磁気記録媒体及び磁気記録装置に関し、特に、熱安定性に優れ、高密度記録に好適な面内磁気記録媒体及びその面内磁気記録媒体を装着した磁気記録装置に関する。

[0002]

【従来の技術】

近年の高度情報化社会の進展にはめざましいものがあり、文字情報のみならず 音声及び画像情報を高速に処理することができるマルチメディアが普及してきて いる。マルチメディアの一つとしてコンピュータ等に装着される磁気記録装置が 知られている。現在、このような磁気記録装置の記録密度を向上させつつ小型化 する方向に開発が進められている。

[0003]

典型的な磁気記録装置は複数の磁気ディスクをスピンドル上に回転可能に装着 している。各磁気ディスクは基板とその上に形成された磁性膜から構成されてお り、情報の記録は特定の磁化方向を有する磁区を磁性膜中に形成することにより 行なわれる。

[0004]

このような磁気記録装置の高密度記録化を実現するためには、磁性膜を構成する粒子径を微小化するとともに各粒子間の相互作用を低下させることが要望されている。しかしながら、粒子径の微小化と粒子間相互作用の低下は、粒子の熱安定性を低下させるという問題がある。

[0005]

磁気ディスク、特に面内方向の磁化を有する磁気ディスクの熱安定性を向上させる技術として、記録層の下地層として、軟磁性のいわゆるキーパー層を設ける方法や記録層の磁化と逆向きの磁化を有する層を設ける方法が知られている。後者の方法の一つとして、図6に示したように、磁気ディスクのCoCrPtB記録層とCoCrPtB磁化安定化層との間に、磁気結合層としてのRu薄膜を形成することにより熱安定性を向上させる技術がE.N. Abarra et al.の文献に発表されている(E.N. Abarra et al. TECHNICAL REPORT OF IEICE. MR2000-34(2000-10))。図6に示した磁気ディスク構造において、記録層と磁化安定化層との間に磁気結合層として0.5~1nm程度の厚みのRu層を介在させると、記録層と磁化安定化層との間に反強磁性的な交換結合が働く。従って、それらの層は反平行の磁化を有するために、記録層の磁化が磁化安定化層により安定化される。このRu層による反強磁性的な交換結合は、記録層の磁化を一層熱的に安定化させ、磁気ディスクの記録再生特性を改善することができることがこの文献に示されている。

[0006]

【発明が解決しようとする課題】

しかしながら、磁気記録装置のさらなる高密度記録化を実現するには、上記文献に開示された磁気ディスクよりも一層熱安定性に優れた磁気ディスクを備える磁気記録装置が要求されている。

[0007]

本発明の第1目的は、熱安定性に優れた磁気記録媒体、特に面内磁気記録媒体 及びそれを備えた磁気記録装置を提供することにある。

[0008]

本発明の第2の目的は、記録した情報の安定性(記録安定性)に優れた磁気記録装置を提供することにある。

[0009]

本発明の第3の目的は、高密度磁気記録に適した磁気記録媒体及びそれを装着 した磁気記録装置を提供することにある。

[0010]

【課題を解決するための手段】

本発明の第1の態様に従えば、磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と;

強磁性材料から形成され、記録層の磁化を安定化させる磁化安定化層と;

上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間に存在する非磁性層と;

上記非磁性層と記録層の間並びに非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在し、上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を増大するエンハンス層とを含む磁気記録媒体が提供される。

[0011]

本発明者は、図6に示した従来型構造を有する磁気ディスクをさらに改良させるべく研究を重ねたところ、Ru層(非磁性層)と記録層との界面及び/またはRu層(非磁性層)と磁化安定化層との界面に、数原子層のCo層を介在させることにより、上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を著しく向上させることができることを見出した。上記界面に介在させる層はCoのみならず、記録層と磁化安定化層の間の交換結合を向上させることができる後述する種々の物質から構成することができ、本明細書においてはこの層を記録層と磁化安定化層の間の交換結合を増大(エンハンス)させる層、すなわち、「エンハンス層」と称する。

[0012]

本発明者の知見によると、このエンハンス層が、記録層と磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を向上させることができる理由は以下の通りである。図6に示した従来型の磁気ディスクでは、CoCrPtB記録層とCoCrPtB磁化安定化層がRu層を介して積層されている。ここで、記録層と磁化安定化層はRu原子層を介して交換結合している。この交換結合は、記録層と磁化安定化層中のCo原子同士がRu原子を介して電子軌道が結合していることに基づくと考えられる。このような結合は、例えば、GMRヘッドにおける人工格子中の結合にも見られる

[0013]

しかしながら、記録層とRu層との界面を観察すると、記録層は、CoCrP

t Bから構成されているために、記録層の結晶粒子はCoリッチでありその粒界はCrリッチな組成を示しており、この結果、記録層のRu層側の表面にはCo原子よりも多くのCrの原子が露出していると考えられる。磁化安定化層もまた記録層と同様にCoCr合金(CoCrPtB)から構成されているために、磁化安定層のRu層側の表面にはCoを覆うCr原子が多量に露出していると考えられる。これらのCr原子層は、前述のRu原子を介する記録層と磁化安定化層中のCo原子同士の電子結合を阻害し、記録層と磁化安定化層の交換結合を弱めていると考えられる。本発明では、Cr原子が表面に露出している記録層または磁化安定化層をエンハンス層で覆うことにより、記録層と磁化安定化層との交換結合をエンハンス層で覆うことにより、記録層と磁化安定化層との交換結合をエンハンス層を構成するCoなどの原子間における交換結合により改善させていると考えられる。

[0014]

エンハンス層は、Co、NiもしくはFeまたはCoNiFe合金から形成し得る。または、エンハンス層は、Co、NiまたはFeと、遷移金属、特に、Pt、Au、Ag、Cu、Pdなどの貴金属との合金から形成され得る。それらの原子または合金は、非磁性層を介して電子的に結合して交換結合磁界を増大する働きがある。あるいは、記録層または磁化安定化層がCo、NiまたはFeを含む材料から形成されている場合には、記録層または磁化安定化層より高濃度のCo、NiまたはFeを含む材料からエンハンス層を形成することもまた有効である。

[0015]

上記エンハンス層は、上記非磁性層と記録層の間並びに非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在すればよいが、非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間に存在する第1エンハンス層と、非磁性層と記録層の間に存在する第2エンハンス層とを含むことが記録層と磁化安定化層の間の交換結合を一層高めるために望ましい。

[0016]

上記磁化安定化層が第1及び第2磁化安定化層を含み、上記非磁性層が第1及 び第2非磁性層を含み、第1非磁性層は第1磁化安定化層と第2磁化安定化層の

間に形成され、第2非磁性層は第2磁化安定化層と記録層との間に形成されていても良い。この場合、上記エンハンス層が第2非磁性層と記録層の間並びに第2 非磁性層と第2磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在し、第1磁化安定化層 と第1非磁性層の間並びに第1非磁性層と第2磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一 方に第1磁化安定化層と第2磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を増大する補助エン ハンス層を備え得る。さらに、上記補助エンハンス層が、第1非磁性層及び第1 磁化安定化層の間に形成された第1補助エンハンス層と;第1非磁性層及び第2 磁化安定化層の間に形成された第2補助エンハンス層と;第1非磁性層及び第2 磁化安定化層の間に形成された第2補助エンハンス層と;を含み得る。補助エン ハンス層は、上記エンハンス層と同じ材料から構成され得る。

[0017]

上記エンハンス層(及び補助エンハンス層)は、交換結合のエンハンス効果を 有意義にするために、0.5~3 n m、好ましくは、0.5~1.5 n mの膜厚 を有することが望ましい。

[0018]

非磁性層は、Ruから形成され得るが、これに限らず、Rh、Ir、Hf、Cu、Cr、Ag、Au、Re、Mo、Nb、W、Ta、Vなどの遷移金属、CoCrRuのようなCoCr系の非磁性合金を用い得る。交換結合を一層高めるためにはRuが望ましい。なお、本発明においてこの非磁性層は記録層と磁化安定化層とを磁気的に結合する働きを有するので磁気結合層とも呼ぶ。

[0019]

本発明の磁気記録媒体において記録層は結晶質であって、該結晶質相がコバルト(Co)を主体とした合金にしてよい。このCo合金においては、CoにCr、Pt、Ta、Nb、Ti、Si、B、P、Pd、V、Tb、Gd、Sm、Nd、Dy、Ho、若しくはEu、又はそれらの組み合わせを含み得る。

[0020]

ここで、記録層にクロム(Cr)を含むと、Coを主体とした結晶粒子(磁性粒子)の粒界近傍又は粒界部にCrの偏析部分を形成することができる。記録層中にさらにTa、Nb、Ti、B若しくはP、又はそれらの元素の組み合わせを含むと、Crの偏析が促進される。この偏析によって、磁性粒子間の磁気的相互

作用が低減でき、磁化反転単位を構成する磁性粒子数を減らすことができる。従って、CoCr合金に上記添加物を含む記録層に本発明のエンハンス層を組み合わせて用いることで、微小な磁化反転単位でありながらも熱揺らぎに強い磁気記録媒体をもたらすことができる。

[0021]

本発明の磁気記録媒体は、さらに、基板、基板上に形成された下地層を備え得る。この場合、下地層上に、磁化安定化層を備え得る。基板はガラス、ポリカーボネートなどのプラスチックから形成し得る。下地層は、Cr若しくはNi、又は、Cr合金若しくはNi合金から形成され得る。Cr合金又はNi合金は、母元素以外にCr、Ti、Ta、V、Ru、W、Mo、Nb、Ni、ZrまたはAlを含み得る。下地層は、磁性層の結晶配向性や格子定数を制御する目的で使用される。下地層は、単層または複数層で用いることも可能である。

[0022]

本発明の第2の態様に従えば、磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と;

強磁性材料から形成され、記録層の磁化を安定化させる磁化安定化層と;

上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間に存在する非磁性層と;を備え、

上記磁気記録媒体の外部磁界に対する磁化曲線がヒステリシスループを示し、磁化を飽和させた後に外部磁界を低下させたときに、外部磁界に対する磁化の変化率が極大を示す点が正の外部磁界の領域に存在し、且つ磁化曲線から求めた交換結合磁界が1kOe以上であることを特徴とする磁気記録媒体が提供される。

[0023]

本発明の磁化安定化層を有する磁気記録媒体は、例えば、図4に示すような磁化曲線で表されるヒステリシスループで表される磁気特性を有する。このヒステリシスループでは、磁気記録媒体の磁化を飽和させた後に外部磁界を低下させたときに、外部磁界に対する磁化の変化率が極大を示す点が正の外部磁界の領域に存在する。このように磁化の変化率が急激に変化するのは、磁気記録媒体の磁化が飽和しているときには、記録層と磁化安定化層の磁化がともに平行であり、外部磁界が低下して磁化の変化率が極大となる領域で磁化安定化層の磁化が反転し

て記録層の磁化を安定化させるためであると考えられる。この領域では、図4に示すようにマイナーヒステリシスループが観測され得る。このマイナーヒステリシスループを図5に示す。マイナーヒステリシスループの中心点から求めた交換結合磁界 H_{ex} は、1kOe以上、好ましくは1.5kOe以上であり、図6に示した従来型の磁気記録媒体に比べて著しく大きく、それゆえ、本発明の磁気記録媒体は熱安定性に優れることが分かる。

[0024]

このような大きな交換結合磁界H_{ex}を生じさせるには、例えば、非磁性層と 記録層の間並びに非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に、前述のエン ハンス層を存在させればよい。

[0025]

本発明の第3の態様に従えば、本発明の第1または第2の態様に従う磁気記録 媒体と;

上記磁気記録媒体に情報を記録又は再生するための磁気ヘッドと;

上記磁気記録媒体を上記磁気ヘッドに対して駆動するための駆動装置と;を含む 磁気記録装置が提供される。

[0026]

本発明に従う磁気記録装置は、熱安定性に優れた磁気記録媒体を装着している ために、長時間に渡る記録安定性に優れる。

[0027]

【発明の実施の形態】

以下に、本発明の磁気記録媒体及び磁気記録装置を実施例及び比較例を用いて 具体的に説明する。ただし、本発明はこれらの実施例に限定されない。

[0028]

【実施例1】

本発明に従う磁気記録媒体の典型例を図1の断面図に示す。磁気記録媒体10は、ガラス基板20上に、第1下地層2、第2下地層4、磁化安定化層6、第1 エンハンス層8、磁気結合層(非磁性層)12、第2エンハンス層8、記録層1 6及び保護層18を備える。各層は以下のようにDCマグネトロンスパッタ装置 を用いてスパッタリングにより形成した。

[0029]

[0030]

第2金属下地層4として、CrMo膜を第1金属下地層2上に膜厚20nmで 形成した。ターゲットにはMo:27原子%のCrMo合金を用いた。成膜条件 は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様にした。

[0031]

[0032]

次いで、第1エンハンス層8として、Co膜を磁化安定化層6上に膜厚1nmで形成した。ターゲットにはCoを用いた。スパッタ時の成膜条件として、投入電力は100Wとし、基板とターゲット間の間隔を長くした以外は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様にした。

[0033]

次いで、磁気結合層12として、Ru膜を第1エンハンス層8上に膜厚0.8 nmで形成した。ターゲットにはRuを用いた。スパッタ時の成膜条件は、第1 エンハンス層8の場合と同様にした。

[0034]

第2エンハンス層14としてのCo膜を、第1エンハンス層8と同様に形成した。第1エンハンス層8及び第2エンハンス層14は、記録層16と磁化安定化

層6との間の交換結合を増大させる働きを有する。

[0035]

記録層16として、面内方向の磁化を有するCoCrPtB膜を第2エンハンス層14上に膜厚18nmで形成した。ターゲットにはCo64Cr20Pt12B4C6金を用いた。成膜条件は、磁化安定化層06の場合と同様にした。

[0036]

最後に、CoCrPtB記録層16上に、保護膜としてのカーボン層を膜厚5 nmで形成した。成膜条件は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様であった。こうして図1に示した構造の磁気ディスク10を製造した。

[0037]

【比較例1】

比較例として、第1及び第2エンハンス層を形成しなかった以外は、実施例1 と同様にして磁気ディスクを製造した。図7に、こうして得られた比較例の磁気 ディスク50の構造を示す。

[0038]

[磁化曲線の評価]

実施例1で製造した磁気ディスクの磁化特性を以下のようにして測定した。VSM (Vibration Sample Magnetometer) により磁界を印加して外部磁界に対する磁化曲線を観測した。得られた結果を図4に示す。図4のヒステリシスループから分かるように、正方向の外部磁界を印加して磁化を飽和させた後、外部磁界を低下させてゆくと、外部磁界がゼロになる前に磁化が急激に低下する領域が存在する。この領域では、外部磁界に対する磁化の変化率(δM/δH)が極大となる点が現れている。そしてこの領域では磁化曲線がヒステリシスを示すマイナーループを描いている。このマイナーループが生じるのは、変化率の極大点に至る前は記録層16と磁化安定化層6の磁化の向きが平行であるが、極大点を境に磁化安定化層6の磁化の向きが反転するためであると考えられる。

[0039]

図5にマイナーループの拡大図を図5(a)に示す。このマイナーループは、正 方向の外部磁界を印加して記録層及び磁化安定化層の磁化を飽和させた後、磁界

を低下させてゆき、磁化の変化率が安定化した後に、再度外部磁界を増加させることにより求めた磁化曲線である。ここで、マイナーループの上端と下端の中点にあるループの中心における磁界Hは、記録層16と安定化層6の磁化の交換結合を示す交換結合磁界Hexとして知られている。この実施例で得られた磁気ディスクの場合、Hexは1.4k〇eであることが分かった。一方、比較例の磁気ディスクでは、図5(b)に示すようなヒステリシスマイナーループが得られ、Hexは0.4k〇eであることが分かった。従って、本発明では第1及び第2エンハンス層を、記録層及び磁気結合層の界面、並びに磁気結合層と磁化安定化層との界面にそれぞれ設けたために、記録層と磁化安定化層との交換結合力が著しく向上している。参考として、従来技術の説明の欄で述べた文献に開示された磁気ディスクのHexは450(〇e)程度であることが報告されている。

[0040]

[0041]

【変形例1】

本発明に従う磁気ディスクでは、記録層と磁化安定化層の間の交換結合をエンハンスするエンハンス層を、記録層及び磁気結合層(非磁性層)の界面、あるいは磁気結合層と磁化安定化層との界面のいずれか一方に設けてもよい。実施例1の変形例として、図2に第1エンハンス層を形成しなかった磁気ディスク30の構造を示し、図3に第2エンハンス層を形成しなかった磁気ディスク40の構造を示す。

[0042]

【変形例2】

実施例1では、磁化安定化層6及び磁気結合層12をそれぞれ一層ずつ形成したが、それらを2層ずつ形成してもよい。すなわち、CrMの第2下地層4上に、CoCrPtB第1磁化安定化層、第1エンハンス層、Ru第1磁気結合層、Co第2エンハンス層、CoCrPtB第2磁化安定化層、第3エンハンス層、Ru第2磁気結合層、Co第2エンハンス層、CoCrPtB記録層及びカーボン保護層を備える構造にすることができる。ここで、第1及び第2エンハンス層(補助エンハンス層)は、第1及び第2磁化安定化層間の交換結合を増大する作用を有し、第3及び第4エンハンス層は、記録層と第2磁化安定化層間の交換結合を増大する作用を有する。あるいは、図2に示した磁気ディスク30において、第2エンハンス層14と記録層16との間に、第2磁化安定化層、第2磁気結合層及び第4エンハンス層を加えても良い。さらに、図3に示した磁気ディスク40において、磁気結合層12と記録層16との間に、第2磁化安定化層、第4エンハンス層及び第2磁気結合層を加えても良い。

[0043]

【実施例2】

実施例1と同様のプロセスにより複数枚の磁気ディスクを作製し、各ディスクの保護層上に潤滑剤を塗布した後、それらを磁気記録装置のスピンドルに同軸上に取り付けた。磁気記録装置の概略構成を図8及び図9に示す。図8は磁気記録装置の上面の図であり、図9は、図8の破線A-A'における磁気記録装置60の断面図である。記録用磁気ヘッドとして、2.1Tの高飽和磁束密度を有する軟磁性膜を用いた薄膜磁気ヘッドを用い、再生のために巨大磁気抵抗効果を有するデュアルスピンバルブ型磁気ヘッドを用いた。記録用磁気ヘッド及び再生用磁気ヘッドは一体化されており、図8及び図9では磁気ヘッド53として示した。この一体型の磁気ヘッド53は磁気ヘッド用駆動系54により制御される。複数の磁気ディスク10は回転駆動系51のスピンドル52により同軸回転される。磁気記録装置の磁気ヘッド面と磁気ディスクとの距離は11nmに保った。この磁気ディスクに40Gbits/inch²(6.20Gbits/cm²)に相当する信号を記録して磁気ディスクのS/Nを評価したところ、25dBの再生出力が得られた。

[0044]

磁気記録装置60の記録安定性を評価するために、磁気記録装置60を80℃、湿度80%の環境下に100時間置いた。100時間経過後に、記録した信号を再生して磁気ディスクのS/Nを測定したところ、24.3dBの再生出力が得られた。すなわち、上記環境下での記録信号の低下率は3%であった。

[0045]

【比較例2】

比較例の磁気ディスク50を実施例2と同様にして磁気記録装置に組み込んだ。この磁気記録装置の記録安定性を評価するために、磁気記録装置60を80℃、湿度80%の環境下に100時間置いた。100時間経過後に、記録した信号を再生して磁気ディスクのS/Nを測定したところ、22.5dBの再生出力が得られた。すなわち、上記環境下での記録信号の低下率は10%であった。従って、本発明の磁気ディスクを備える磁気記録装置は記録安定性に関して優れていることが分かる。

[0046]

以上、本発明を実施例により具体的に説明してきたが、本発明はそれらに限定されない。第1及び第2金属下地層、磁化安定化層、磁気結合層、第1及び第2 エンハンス層及び記録層は、実施例で示した材料に限らず、種々の知られた材料で構成することができる。

[0047]

【発明の効果】

本発明の磁気記録媒体は、エンハンス層の存在により記録層と磁化安定化層の間の交換結合力が著しく向上しているために熱安定に優れる。従って、高密度記録のために微小磁区を形成しても、熱揺らぎが少なく、記録した情報を長期間に渡って安定に保持することができる。それゆえ、本発明の磁気記録媒体を備える磁気記録装置は、記録安定性に優れ、例えば、40Gbits/inch 2 (6.20Gbits/cm 2)を超える超高密度磁気記録の実現を可能にする。

【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】

実施例1の磁気ディスクの断面構造を示す図である。

【図2】

実施例1の磁気ディスクの変形例の断面構造を示す図である。

【図3】

実施例1の磁気ディスクの別の変形例の断面構造を示す図である。

【図4】

実施例1の磁気ディスクのヒステリシスループ(メジャーループ)を示すグラフである。

【図5】

図4におけるヒステリシスループのマイナーループを示すグラフである。

【図6】

従来の磁気ディスクの構造を示す断面図である。

【図7】

比較例1の磁気ディスクの断面構造を示す図である。

【図8】

本発明の実施例2に従う磁気記録装置の一例を上方から見た概略構成図である

【図9】

図8に示す磁気記録装置のA-A'方向の断面図である。

【符号の説明】

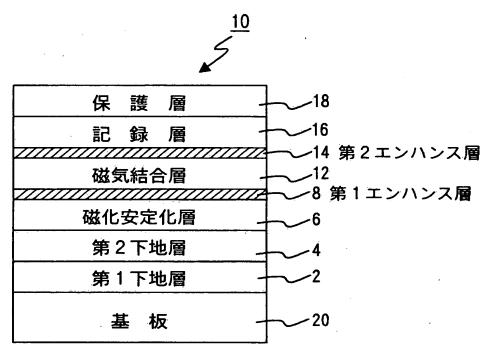
- 2 第1金属下地層
- 4 第2金属下地層
- 6 磁化安定化層
- 8 第1エンハンス層
- 10 磁気ディスク
- 12 磁気結合層
- 14 第1エンハンス層
- 16 記録層
- 20 基板

- 52 スピンドル
- 53 磁気ヘッド
- 60 磁気記録装置

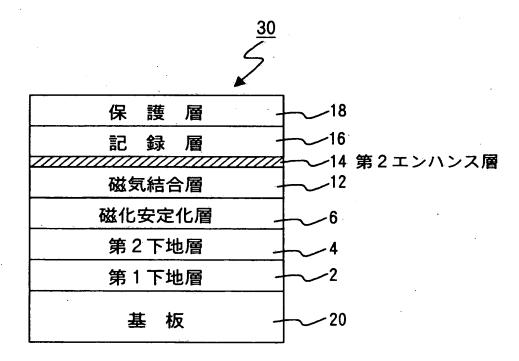
【書類名】

図面

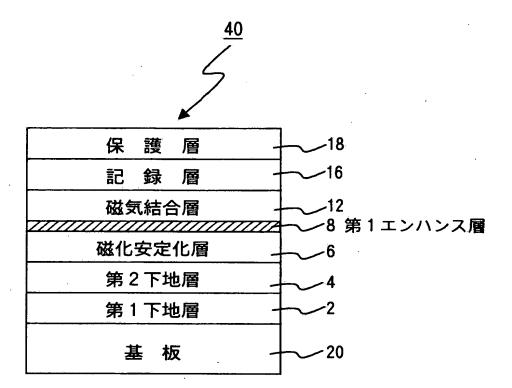
【図1】

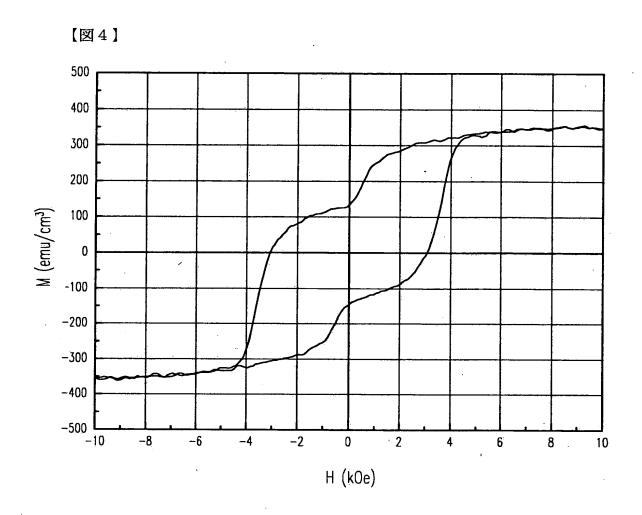


【図2】



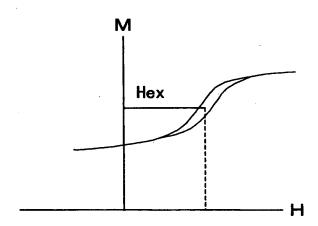
【図3】



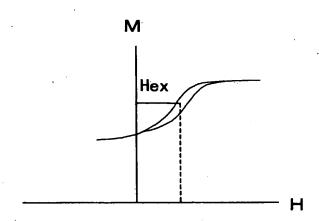


【図5】

(a)



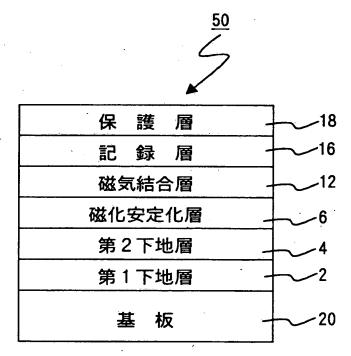
(b)



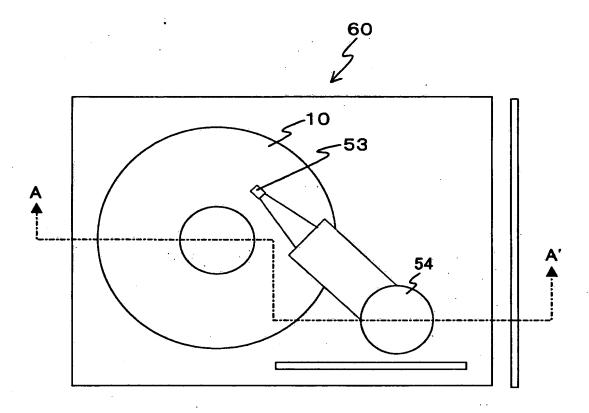
【図6】

保 護 層
磁気記録層
磁気結合層(Ru)
磁化安定化層
下 地 層
基板

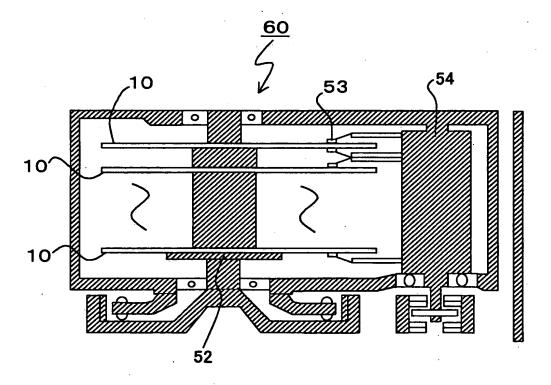
【図7】



【図8】



【図9】



【書類名】 要約書

【要約】

【課題】 熱安定性に優れた高密度記録用磁気記録媒体を提供する。

【解決手段】 面内磁気記録媒体10は、基板20上に、NiA1第1下地層2、CrMo第2下地層4、CoCrPtB磁化安定化層6、Ru磁気結合層12、Co第2エンハンス層8、CoCrPtB記録層16及びカーボン保護層18を備える。磁化安定化層6は記録層16の磁化を安定化させ、磁気結合層12は記録層16と磁化安定化層6の交換結合力をもたらす。磁気結合層12及び磁化安定化層6の界面並びに磁気結合層12及び記録層16の界面に、それぞれ、Coから構成された第1エンハンス層8及び第2エンハンス層14を備えることにより、交換結合が著しく向上する。これにより、磁気記録媒体の熱安定性に優れ、長期間に渡る記録安定性に優れた磁気記録装置を提供することができる。

【選択図】 図1

出願人履歴情報

識別番号

[000005810]

1. 変更年月日 1990年 8月29日

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TRANSLATOR'S VERIFICATION

I hereby declare and state that I am knowledgeable of each of the Japanese and English languages and that I made and reviewed the attached translation of the certified copy of Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-359200, filed on November 27, 2000 from the Japanese language into the English language, and that I believe my attached translation to be accurate, true and correct to the best of my knowledge and ability.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of this application or any patent issued thereon.

Date:	February 3. 2004
	Kiyoto Johimura
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[TITLE OF THE DOCUMENT] Specification

[TITLE OF THE INVENTION] MAGNETIC RECORDING MEDIUM AND MAGNETIC RECORDING APPARATUS

[CLAIMS]

[Claim 1] A magnetic recording medium comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

a magnetization-stabilizing layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer;

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer;

an enhancing layer which exists at least one of positions between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, and which increases exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[Claim 2] The information-recording medium according to claim 1, characterized in that the enhancing layer is formed of one selected from the group consisting of Co, Ni, Fe, and CoNiFe alloy.

[Claim 3] The information-recording medium according to claim 1, characterized in that the enhancing layer is

formed of an alloy containing a transition metal and Co, Ni or Fe.

[Claim 4] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 1, characterized in that:

the recording layer or the magnetization-stabilizing layer is formed of a material containing Co, Ni or Fe; and

the enhancing layer is formed of a material containing Co, Ni or Fe at a concentration which is higher than a concentration in the recording layer or the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[Claim 5] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that the enhancing layer includes a first enhancing layer which exists between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer and a second enhancing layer which exists between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer.

[Claim 6] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that the enhancing layer has a film thickness of 0.5 to 3 nm.

[Claim 7] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that the non-magnetic layer is formed of Ru.

[Claim 8] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that:

the magnetization-stabilizing layer includes a first
magnetization-stabilizing layer and a second magnetizationstabilizing layer, and the non-magnetic layer includes a
first non-magnetic layer and a second non-magnetic layer,
the first non-magnetic layer being formed between the first
magnetization-stabilizing layer and the second
magnetization-stabilizing layer, and the second
magnetic layer being formed between the second
magnetization-stabilizing layer and the recording layer;
and

the enhancing layer is provided at least at one of positions between the second non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the second non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and comprises an auxiliary enhancing layer which is provided at least at one of positions between the first magnetization-stabilizing layer and the first non-magnetic layer and between the first non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and which increases exchange coupling between the first magnetization-stabilizing layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[Claim 9] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 8, characterized in that the auxiliary enhancing layer includes a first auxiliary enhancing layer which is

formed between the first non-magnetic layer and the first magnetization-stabilizing layer, and a second auxiliary enhancing layer which is formed between the first non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[Claim 10] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 9, characterized by further comprising a substrate on which an underlying base layer is formed, wherein the magnetization-stabilizing layer is provided on the underlying base layer.

[Claim 11] A magnetic recording medium characterized by comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

a magnetization-stabilizing layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer; and

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer,

wherein a magnetization curve of the magnetic recording medium with respect to an external magnetic field exhibits a hysteresis loop, a point, at which a rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field exhibits a local maximum when the external magnetic field is lowered after magnetization is saturated,

exists in a positive area of the external magnetic field, and an exchange coupling magnetic field, which is determined from the magnetization curve, is not less than 1 kOe.

[Claim 12] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 11, characterized by further including an enhancing layer which exists at least one of positions between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, and which increases exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[Claim 13] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 11 or 12, characterized in that the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer include Co, Ni or Fe, and the enhancing layer is formed of Co, Ni or Fe.

[Claim 14] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 1 or 11, characterized in that the recording layer has a magnetization in the in-plane direction.

[Claim 15] A magnetic recording apparatus comprising:
the magnetic recording medium according to claim 1 or
11;

a magnetic head which is used to record or reproduce information on the magnetic recording medium; and

a driving unit which drives the magnetic recording medium with respect to the magnetic head.

[DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION]

[0001]

[TECHNICAL FIELD TO WHICH THE INVENTION BELONGS]

The present invention relates to a magnetic recording medium and a magnetic recording apparatus. In particular, the present invention relates to an in-plane magnetic recording medium which is excellent in thermal stability and which is preferable for high density recording, and a magnetic recording apparatus which is installed with the in-plane magnetic recording medium.

[0002]

[PRIOR ART]

Accompanying with the recent progress of the advanced information society, the multimedia, with which not only the character information but also the voice and image information can be processed at a high speed, are popularized. A magnetic recording apparatus, which is installed to a computer or the like, is known as one of the multimedia. At present, the development is advanced in order that the magnetic recording apparatus is miniaturized while improving the recording density of such a magnetic recording apparatus.

[0003]

A typical magnetic recording apparatus includes a plurality of magnetic disks which are rotatably installed

onto a spindle. Each of the magnetic disks comprises a substrate and a magnetic film formed thereon. Information is recorded by forming a magnetic domain having a specified magnetization direction in the magnetic film.

[0004]

In order to realize the high density recording with the magnetic recording apparatus as described above, it is demanded that the diameter of grains for constructing the magnetic film is made fine and minute and the interaction between the respective grains is lowered. However, a problem arises such that the thermal stability of the grains is lowered if the grain diameter is made fine and minute and the interaction between the grains is lowered.

[0005]

The known technique for improving the thermal stability of the magnetic disk, especially a magnetic disk having magnetization in the in-plane direction include a method in which a so-called keeper layer having soft magnetization is provided as an underlying base layer for a recording layer, and a method in which a layer having magnetization in a direction opposite to that of magnetization of a recording layer is provided. As one of the latter method, a technique is disclosed in a literature of E. N. Abarra et al. (E. N. Abarra et al., TECHNICAL REPORT OF IEICE. MR2000-34 (2000-10)) as shown in Fig. 6,

in which the thermal stability is improved by forming an Ru thin film as a magnetic coupling layer between a recording layer of CoCrPtB and a magnetization-stabilizing layer of CoCrPtB of a magnetic disk. In the structure of the magnetic disk shown in Fig. 6, when the Ru layer having a thickness of about 0.5 to 1 nm is allowed to intervene as the magnetic coupling layer between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, the exchange coupling is effected in an antiferromagnetic manner between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer. Therefore, the layers have antiparallel magnetization, and hence the magnetization of the recording layer is stabilized by the magnetization-stabilizing layer. described in this literature that the antiferromagnetic exchange coupling effected by the Ru layer further thermally stabilizes the magnetization of the recording layer, making it possible to improve the recording and reproduction characteristics of the magnetic disk.

[0006]

[PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED BY THE INVENTION]

However, in order to realize further advanced high density recording with a magnetic recording apparatus, it is required to provide a magnetic recording apparatus which is provided with a magnetic disk that is more excellent in thermal stability than the magnetic disk disclosed in the

literature described above.

[0007]

A first object of the present invention is to provide a magnetic recording medium, especially an in-plane magnetic recording medium which is excellent in thermal stability, and a magnetic recording apparatus provided with the same.

[8000]

A second object of the present invention is to provide a magnetic recording apparatus which is excellent in stability (recording stability) of recorded information.

[0009]

A third object of the present invention is to provide a magnetic recording medium which is suitable for high density recording, and a magnetic recording apparatus installed with the same.

[0010]

[MEANS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM]

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a magnetic recording medium comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

a magnetization-stabilizing layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer;

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer; and

an enhancing layer which exists at least one of positions between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, and which increases exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[0011]

As a result of investigations performed by the present inventors, it has been found out that the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization—stabilizing layer can be remarkably improved by intervening a several—atoms—layered Co layer at an interface between the Ru layer (non—magnetic layer) and the recording layer and/or an interface between the Ru layer (non—magnetic layer) and the magnetization—stabilizing layer of the magnetic disk having the conventional type structure shown in Fig. 6. The layer to be intervened at the interface is not limited to Co, but may be constructed with a variety of substances capable of improving the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization—stabilizing layer as described later on. In this specification, this layer is referred to as "enhancing

layer", which functions to enhance the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[0012]

According to the knowledge of the present inventors, the reason why the enhancing layer successfully improves the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer is as follows. In the case of the conventional type magnetic disk shown in Fig. 6, the recording layer of CoCrPtB and the magnetizationstabilizing layer of CoCrPtB are stacked with the Ru layer intervening therebetween. In this case, the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer effect the exchange coupling via the Ru atom layer. It is considered that the exchange coupling is effected on the basis of the fact that the electron orbits are coupled between the Co atoms in the recording layer and the magnetizationstabilizing layer via the Ru atoms. Such a coupling is also found, for example, in the coupling in an artificial lattice of a GMR head.

[0013]

However, when the interface between the recording layer and the Ru layer is observed, then the crystal grains in the recording layer are rich in Co, and the grain boundary therebetween has a Cr-rich composition, because

the recording layer is composed of CoCrPtB. As a result, it is considered that the Cr atoms, which amount is larger than that of the Co atoms, are exposed on the surface of the recording layer on the side of the Ru layer. magnetization-stabilizing layer is also composed of the CoCr alloy (CoCrPtB) in the same manner as the recording layer. Therefore, it is considered that a large amount of Cr atoms for covering Co are exposed on the surface of the magnetization-stabilizing layer on the side of the Ru layer. It is assumed that the Cr atom layers inhibit the electron coupling between the Co atoms in the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer via the Ru atoms as described above, thereby weakening the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetizationstabilizing layer. In the present invention, the recording layer or the magnetization-stabilizing layer, on which the Cr atoms are exposed on the surface, is covered with the enhancing layer. Accordingly, it is considered that the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer is improved by the exchange coupling between the atoms such as Co for constructing the enhancing layer.

[0014]

The enhancing layer may be formed of Co, Ni, Fe, or a CoNiFe alloy. Alternatively, the enhancing layer may be

formed of an alloy containing Co, Ni, or Fe and a transition metal, especially a noble metal such as Pt, Au, Ag, Cu, and Pd. The atom or the alloy as described above functions to make the coupling electronically via the non-magnetic layer so that the exchange coupling magnetic field is increased. Alternatively, when the recording layer or the magnetization-stabilizing layer is formed of a material containing Co, Ni, or Fe, it is also effective to form the enhancing layer with a material containing Co, Ni, or Fe at a concentration which is higher than a concentration in the recording layer or the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[0015]

The enhancing layer may exist at least at one of positions between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer. However, it is desirable that the enhancing layer includes a first enhancing layer which exists between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer and a second enhancing layer which exists between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer in order to further enhance the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[0016]

The magnetization-stabilizing layer may include a

first magnetization-stabilizing layer and a second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and the non-magnetic layer may include a first non-magnetic layer and a second nonmagnetic layer, and a first non-magnetic layer may be formed between the first magnetization-stabilizing layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and a second non-magnetic layer may be formed between the second magnetization-stabilizing layer and the recording layer. In this case, the enhancing layer may exist at least at one of positions between the second non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the second non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and may include an auxiliary enhancing layer which exists at least at one of positions between the first magnetizationstabilizing layer and the first non-magnetic layer and between the first non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and which increases exchange coupling between the first magnetizationstabilizing layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer. Further, the auxiliary enhancing layer may include a first auxiliary enhancing layer which is formed between the first non-magnetic layer and the first magnetizationstabilizing layer, and a second auxiliary enhancing layer which is formed between the first non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer. The auxiliary

enhancing layer may be composed of the same material as that of the enhancing layer described above.

[0017]

It is desirable that the enhancing layer (as well as the auxiliary enhancing layer) has a film thickness of 0.5 to 3 nm, preferably 0.5 to 1.5 nm, in order to obtain a significant enhancing effect for the exchange coupling.

[0018]

The non-magnetic layer may be formed of Ru. However, there is no limitation thereto. It is possible to use a transition metal such as Rh, Ir, Hf, Cu, Cr, Ag, Au, Re, Mo, Nb, W, Ta, and V, and a non-magnetic alloy based on the CoCr system such as CoCrRu. Ru is preferred in order to further enhance the exchange coupling. In the present invention, the non-magnetic layer has a function to magnetically couple the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer. Therefore, the non-magnetic layer is also referred to as "magnetic coupling layer".

[0019]

In the magnetic recording medium of the present invention, the recording layer may be crystalline, and the crystalline phase may be composed of an alloy principally containing cobalt (Co). The Co alloy may contain Co as well as Cr, Pt, Ta, Nb, Ti, Si, B, P, Pd, V, Tb, Gd, Sm,

Nd, Dy, Ho or Eu, or a combination thereof.

[0020]

When the recording layer contains chromium (Cr), it is possible to form a segregation portion of Cr at the grain boundary or in the vicinity of the grain boundary between the crystal grains (magnetic grains) principally containing Co. When the recording layer further contains Ta, Nb, Ti, B, P, or a combination of these elements, the segregation of Cr is facilitated. Owing to the segregation, it is possible to reduce the magnetic interaction between the magnetic grains, and it is possible to decrease the number of magnetic grains for constructing the unit of inversion of magnetization. Therefore, it is possible to provide the magnetic recording medium which is strong against the thermal fluctuation regardless of the minute unit of inversion of magnetization, when the enhancing layer of the present invention is used in combination with the recording layer containing the foregoing additive in the CoCr alloy.

[0021]

The magnetic recording medium of the present invention may further comprise a substrate, and an underlying base layer which is formed on the substrate. In this case, the magnetic recording medium may comprise the magnetization—stabilizing layer on the underlying base layer. The substrate may be formed of glass or plastic such as

polycarbonate. The underlying base layer may be formed of Cr or Ni, or, Cr alloy or Ni alloy. The Cr alloy or the Ni alloy may contain Cr, Ti, Ta, V, Ru, W, Mo, Nb, Ni, Zr, or Al other than the base element. The underlying base layer is used in order to control the crystalline orientation and the lattice constant of the magnetic layer. The underlying base layer may be also used as a single layer or a plurality of layers.

[0022]

According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a magnetic recording medium characterized by comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

a magnetization-stabilizing layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer; and

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer,

wherein a magnetization curve of the magnetic recording medium with respect to an external magnetic field exhibits a hysteresis loop, a point, at which a rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field exhibits a local maximum when the external magnetic field is lowered after magnetization is saturated,

exists in a positive area of the external magnetic field, and an exchange coupling magnetic field, which is determined from the magnetization curve, is not less than 1 kOe.

[0023]

The magnetic recording media having the magnetizationstabilizing layer of the present invention has a magnetic characteristic which is represented by a hysteresis loop as depicted by a magnetization curve as shown in Fig. 4. the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 4, a point, at which a rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field exhibits a local maximum when the external magnetic field is lowered after magnetization of the magnetic recording medium is saturated, exists in an area of positive magnetic field. It is considered that the sudden change of rate of change of magnetization is caused for the following reason. That is, when the magnetization of the magnetic recording medium is saturated, both of the magnetizations of the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer are parallel, and the magnetization of the magnetization-stabilizing layer is inverted in the area in which the rate of change of magnetization exhibits the local maximum as the external magnetic field is lowered, thereby stabilizing the magnetization of the recording layer. In this area, a

minor hysteresis loop as shown in Fig. 4 may be observed. The minor hysteresis loop is shown in Fig. 5. The exchange coupling magnetic field $H_{\rm ex}$, which is determined from the central point of the minor hysteresis loop, is not less than 1 kOe, preferably not less than 1.5 kOe, which is remarkably larger than that of the conventional type magnetic recording medium shown in Fig. 6. Therefore, it is appreciated that the magnetic recording medium of the present invention is excellent in thermal stability.

[0024]

In order to generate the large exchange coupling magnetic field $H_{\rm ex}$, the enhancing layer may be provided at least at one of positions between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[0025]

According to a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a magnetic recording apparatus comprising:

the magnetic recording medium according to the first or the second aspect of the present invention;

a magnetic head which is used to record or reproduce information on the magnetic recording medium; and

a driving unit which drives the magnetic recording medium with respect to the magnetic head.

[0026]

The magnetic recording apparatus according to the present invention is excellent in recording stability over a long period of time, because the magnetic recording apparatus is installed with the magnetic recording medium which is excellent in thermal stability.

[0027]

[EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION]

The magnetic recording medium and the magnetic recording apparatus according to the present invention will be specifically explained below in accordance with embodiments and Comparative Examples. However, the present invention is not limited to the embodiments.

[0028]

[FIRST EMBODIMENT]

Fig. 1 shows a sectional view of a typical embodiment of the magnetic recording medium according to the present invention. A magnetic recording medium 10 comprises, on a glass substrate 20, a first underlying base layer 2, a second underlying base layer 4, a magnetization-stabilizing layer 6, a first enhancing layer 8, a magnetic coupling layer (non-magnetic layer) 12, a second enhancing layer 8, a recording layer 16, and a protective layer 18. The respective layers were formed as follows by sputtering using a DC magnetron sputtering apparatus.

[0029]

An NiAl film was formed as the first metal underlying base layer 2 on the glass substrate 1 having a diameter of 2.5 inches (6.25 cm) by sputtering using the DC magnetron sputtering apparatus. An NiAl alloy having an atomic ratio of Ni:Al = 50:50 was used for a target. The NiAl film had a film thickness of 50 nm. The Ar gas pressure during the sputtering was 0.3 Pa, and the introduced electric power was 0.5 kW. The substrate was heated to 340 °C after the pressure of the sputtering chamber was reduced to be not more than 1 x 10^{-5} Pa before starting the sputtering. The speed of film formation was about 3 nm/second under this condition.

[0030]

A CrMo film was formed as the second metal underlying base layer 4 to have a film thickness of 20 nm on the first metal underlying base layer 2. A CrMo alloy containing Mo by 27 atomic % was used for a target. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2.

[0031]

A CoCrPtB film was formed as the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6 to have a film thickness of 6 nm on the first metal underlying base layer 4. A $Co_{64}Cr_{20}Pt_{12}B_4$ alloy was used for a target. The film formation condition was

the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2.

[0032]

Subsequently, a Co film was formed as the first enhancing layer 8 to have a film thickness of 1 nm on the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6. Co was used for a target. The film formation during the sputtering was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2 except that the introduced electric power was 100 W, and the spacing distance between the substrate and the target was lengthened.

[0033]

Subsequently, an Ru film was formed as the magnetic coupling layer 12 to have a film thickness of 0.8 nm on the first enhancing layer 8. Ru was used for a target. The film formation condition during the sputtering was the same as that for the first enhancing layer 8.

[0034]

A Co film was formed as the second enhancing layer 14 in the same manner as the first enhancing layer 8. The first enhancing layer 8 and the second enhancing layer 14 function to increase the exchange coupling between the recording layer 16 and the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6.

[0035]

A CoCrPtB film having magnetization in the in-plane direction was formed as the recording layer 16 to have a film thickness of 18 nm on the second enhancing layer 14. A $Co_{64}Cr_{20}Pt_{12}B_4$ alloy was used for a target. The film formation condition was the same as that for the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6.

[0036]

Finally, a carbon layer was formed as a protective film to have a film thickness of 5 nm on the CoCrPtB recording layer 16. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2. Thus, the magnetic disk 10 having the structure shown in Fig. 1 was produced.

[0037]

[Comparative Example 1]

A magnetic disk was produced as Comparative Example in the same manner as in the first embodiment except that the first and second enhancing layers were not formed. Fig. 7 shows a structure of the magnetic disk 50 of Comparative Example obtained as described above.

[0038]

[Evaluation of Magnetization Curve]

The magnetic characteristics of the magnetic disk produced in the first embodiment were measured as follows.

The magnetic field was applied with VSM (Vibration Sample

Magnetometer) to observe the magnetization curve with respect to the external magnetic field. An obtained result is shown in Fig. 4. As appreciated from a hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 4, an area exists, in which the magnetization is suddenly lowered before the external magnetic field is zero when the external magnetic field is lowered after the external magnetic field in the positive direction is applied to saturate the magnetization. In this area, a point appears, at which the rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field $(\delta M/\delta H)$ is locally maximized. In this area, the magnetization curve depicts a minor loop which exhibits hysteresis. The reason why the minor loop appears is considered as follows. is, the direction of magnetization of the recording layer 16 is parallel to that of the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6 before arrival at the local maximum point of the rate of change. However, the direction of magnetization of the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6 is inverted at the local maximum point.

[0039]

Fig. 5(a) shows a magnified view of the minor loop.

The minor loop resides in the magnetization curve which has been obtained such that the external magnetic field in the positive direction is applied to saturate the magnetizations of the recording layer and the

magnetization-stabilizing layer, and then the magnetic field is lowered to stabilize the rate of change of magnetization, followed by increasing the external magnetic field again. It is noted that the magnetic field H, which is obtained at the center of the loop and which is located at the midpoint between the upper end and the lower end of the minor loop, is known as the exchange coupling magnetic field Hex which exhibits the exchange coupling of magnetization between the recording layer 16 and the stabilizing layer 6. It has been revealed that H_{ex} is 1.4 kOe in the case of the magnetic disk obtained in this embodiment. On the other hand, in the case of the magnetic disk of Comparative Example, a hysteresis minor loop as shown in Fig. 5(b) is obtained, for which it has been revealed that Hex is 0.4 kOe. Therefore, the exchange coupling force between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer is remarkably improved in the present invention, because the first and second enhancing layers are provided at the interface between the recording layer and the magnetic coupling layer and at the interface between the magnetic coupling layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, respectively. For reference, it has been reported that the magnetic disk, which is disclosed in the literature described in the section of prior art, has H_{ex} of about 450 (Oe).

[0040]

Further, the volume of activation V of each of the magnetic recording media obtained in the first embodiment and Comparative Example was measured to determine the value $(Ku \cdot V)/(k \cdot T)$ as an index of thermal stability of the magnetic recording medium. As a result, the value was about 71 in the case of the magnetic recording medium of the first embodiment, while the value was 65 in the case of the magnetic recording medium of Comparative Example. Also from this fact, it is understood that the magnetic recording medium of the present invention is excellent in thermal stability. Further, in the case of the magnetic recording medium of the embodiment, Brt (= $4\pi Mr \cdot t$ (wherein Mr represents the residual magnetic field, and t represents the thickness)), which is an index to exhibit the possibility of high density recording of the in-plane magnetic recording medium, was about 44 Gum.

[0041]

[First Modified Embodiment]

In the magnetic disk according to the present invention, the enhancing layer, which enhances the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, may be provided at any one of the interface between the recording layer and the magnetic coupling layer (non-magnetic layer) and the interface

between the magnetic coupling layer and the magnetizationstabilizing layer. As a modified embodiment of the first
embodiment, Fig. 2 shows a structure of a magnetic disk 30
in which the first enhancing layer is not formed, and Fig.
3 shows a structure of a magnetic disk 40 in which the
second enhancing layer is not formed.

[0042]

[Second Modified Embodiment]

In the first embodiment, each one layer of the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6 and the magnetic coupling layer 12 has been formed. However, two layers of the former and the two layer of the latter may be formed. is, it is possible to provide a structure comprising, on a second underlying base layer 4 of CrMo, a first magnetization-stabilizing layer of CoCrPtB, a first enhancing layer, a first magnetic coupling layer of Ru, a second enhancing layer of Co, a second magnetizationstabilizing layer of CoCrPtB, a third enhancing layer, a second magnetic coupling layer of Ru, a fourth enhancing layer of Co, a recording layer of CoCrPtB, and a protective layer of carbon. In this case, the first and second enhancing layers (auxiliary enhancing layers) function to increase the exchange coupling between the first and second magnetization-stabilizing layers. The third and fourth enhancing layers function to increase the exchange coupling

between the recording layer and the second magnetization—stabilizing layer. Alternatively, in the magnetic disk 30 shown in Fig. 2, a second magnetization—stabilizing layer, a second magnetic coupling layer, and a fourth enhancing layer may be added between the second enhancing layer 14 and the recording layer 16. Further, in the magnetic disk 40 shown in Fig. 3, a second magnetization—stabilizing layer, a fourth enhancing layer, and a second magnetic coupling layer may be added between the magnetic coupling layer 12 and the recording layer 16.

[0043]

[Second Embodiment]

A plurality of magnetic disks were produced in accordance with the same process as that used in the first embodiment. A lubricant was applied onto the protective layers of the respective disks, and then the disks were coaxially attached to a spindle of a magnetic recording apparatus. A schematic arrangement of the magnetic recording apparatus is shown in Figs. 8 and 9. Fig. 8 shows a top view of the magnetic recording apparatus, and Fig. 9 shows a cross-sectional view of the magnetic recording apparatus 60 taken along a broken line A-A' shown in Fig. 8. A thin film magnetic head, which was based on the use of a soft magnetic film having a high saturation magnetic flux density of 2.1 T, was used as a recording

magnetic head. A dual spin bulb-type magnetic head, which had the giant magnetic resistance effect, was used for the purpose of reproduction. The recording magnetic head and the reproducing magnetic head were integrated into one unit, and they are indicated as a magnetic head 53 in Figs. 8 and 9. The integrated type magnetic head 53 is controlled by a magnetic head-driving system 54. The plurality of magnetic disks 10 are coaxially rotated by the spindle 52 of a rotary driving system 51. The distance between the magnetic disk and the magnetic head surface of the magnetic recording apparatus was maintained to be 11 nm. A signal corresponding to 40 Gbits/inch² (6.20 Gbits/cm²) was recorded on the magnetic disk to evaluate S/N of the magnetic disk.—As a result, a reproduction output of 25 dB was obtained.

[0044]

In order to evaluate the recording stability of the magnetic recording apparatus 60, the magnetic recording apparatus 60 was placed in an environment at 80 °C at a humidity of 80 % for 100 hours. After the passage of 100 hours, the recorded signal was reproduced to measure S/N of the magnetic disk. As a result, a reproduction output of 24.3 dB was obtained. That is, the rate of decrease of the recording signal in the environment described above was 3 %.

[0045]

[Comparative Example 2]

The magnetic disk 50 of Comparative Example was incorporated into the magnetic recording apparatus in the same manner as in the second embodiment. In order to evaluate the recording stability of the magnetic recording apparatus, the magnetic recording apparatus 60 was placed in an environment at 80 °C at a humidity of 80 % for 100 hours. After the passage of 100 hours, the recorded signal was reproduced to measure S/N of the magnetic disk. As a result, a reproduction output of 22.5 dB was obtained. That is, the rate of decrease of the recording signal in the environment described above was 10 %. Therefore, it is appreciated that the magnetic recording apparatus provided with the magnetic disk of the present invention is excellent in recording stability.

[0046]

In the foregoing, the present invention has been specifically explained with reference to the embodiments. However, the present invention is not limited thereto. The first metal underlying base layer, the second metal underlying base layer, the magnetization-stabilizing layer, the magnetic coupling layer, the first enhancing layer, the second enhancing layer and the recording layer may be constructed with a variety of known materials without being

limited to the materials described in the embodiments.

[0047]

[EFFECTS OF THE INVENTION]

In the magnetic recording medium of the present invention, the exchange coupling force, which is exerted between the recording layer and the magnetization—stabilizing layer, is remarkably improved owing to the existence of the enhancing layer. Therefore, even when the minute magnetic domains are formed for the high density recording, then the thermal fluctuation scarcely occurs, and it is possible to stably retain the recorded information over a long period of time. Accordingly, the magnetic recording apparatus, which is provided with the magnetic recording medium of the present invention, is excellent in recording stability. It is possible to realize the super high density recording exceeding, for example, 40 Gbits/inch² (6.20 Gbits/cm²).

[BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS]

- [Fig. 1] Fig. 1 shows a cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according to a first embodiment.
- [Fig. 2] Fig. 2 shows a cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according to a modified embodiment.
- [Fig. 3] Fig. 3 shows a cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according to another modified embodiment.
 - [Fig. 4] Fig. 4 shows a graph illustrating a

hysteresis loop (major loop) of the magnetic disk according to the first embodiment.

[Fig. 5] Fig. 5 shows a graph illustrating a minor loop of the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 4.

[Fig. 6] Fig. 6 shows a sectional view illustrating a structure of a conventional magnetic disk.

[Fig. 7] Fig. 7 shows a cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according to a comparative embodiment 1.

[Fig. 8] Fig. 8 shows a schematic arrangement of a magnetic recording apparatus according to a second embodiment of the present invention as viewed from a position thereover.

[Fig. 9] Fig. 9 shows a sectional view as viewed in a direction of A-A' illustrating the magnetic recording apparatus shown in Fig. 8.

position thereover.

[EXPLANATION OF REFERENCE NUMERALS]

- 2 first metal underlying base layer
- 4 second metal underlying base layer
- 6 magnetization-stabilizing layer
- 8 first enhancing layer
- 10 magnetic disk
- 12 magnetic coupling force
- 14 first enhancing layer
- 16 recording layer

Patent Application No. 2000-359200

- 20 substrate
- 52 spindle
- 53 magnetic head
- 60 magnetic recording apparatus

[TITLE OF THE DOCUMENT] Abstract

[ABSTRACT]

[PROBLEMS] To provide a magnetic recording medium for high-density recording which is excellent in thermal stability.

[MEANS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS] An in-plane magnetic recording medium 10 has, on a substrate 20, a first underlying base layer 2 of NiAl, a second underlying base layer 4 of CrMo, a magnetization-stabilizing layer 6 of CoCrPtB, a magnetic coupling layer 12 of Ru, a second enhancing layer 8 of Co, a recording layer 16 of CoCrPtB, and a protective layer 18 of carbon. The magnetizationstabilizing layer 6 stabilizes the magnetization of the recording layer 16, and the magnetic coupling layer 12 provides the exchange coupling force which exerts between the recording layer 16 and the magnetization-stabilizing The exchange coupling is remarkably improved by layer 6. providing a first enhancing layer 8 of Co and a second enhancing layer 14 of Co in the interface between the magnetic coupling layer 12 and the magnetizationstabilizing layer6 and in the interface between the magnetic coupling layer 12 and the recording layer 16, respectively. Accordingly, it is possible to provide a magnetic recording apparatus which is excellent in recording stability over a long period of time in which the

Patent Application No. 2000-359200

thermal stability of the magnetic recording medium is excellent.

[SELECTED DRAWINGS] Fig. 1

Fig. 1

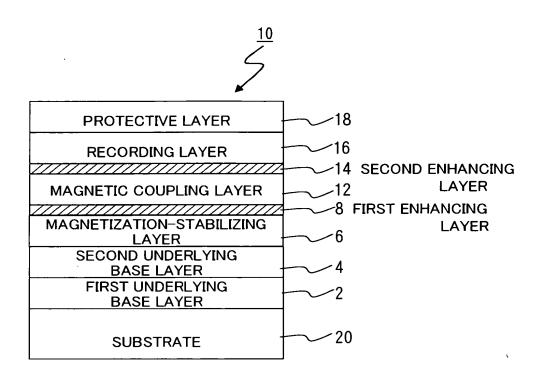


Fig. 2

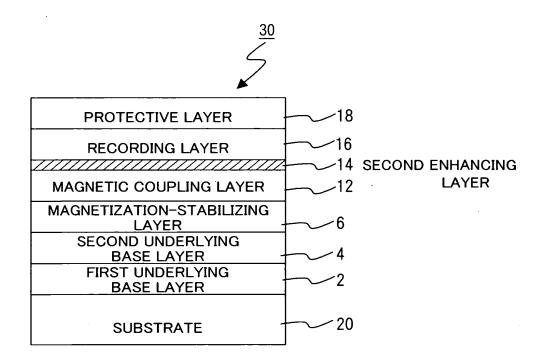


Fig. 3

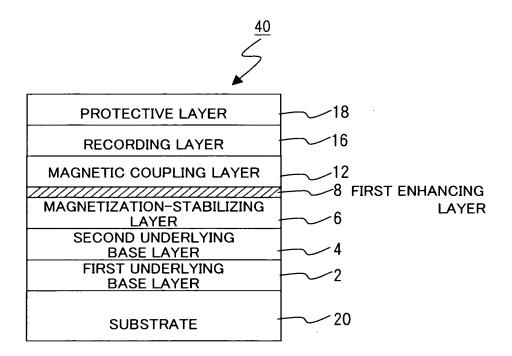


Fig. 4

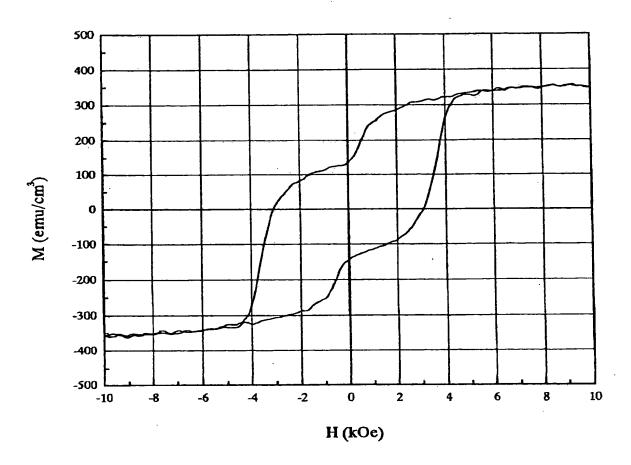
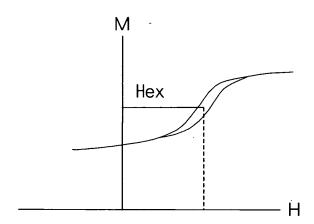


Fig. 5

(a)



(b)

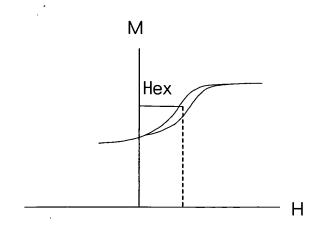


Fig. 6

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PROTECTIVE LAYER
MAGNETIC RECORDING LAYER
MAGNETIC COUPLING LAYER (Ru)
MAGNETIZATION- STABILIZING LAYER
UNDERLYING BASE LAYER
SUBSTRATE

Fig. 7

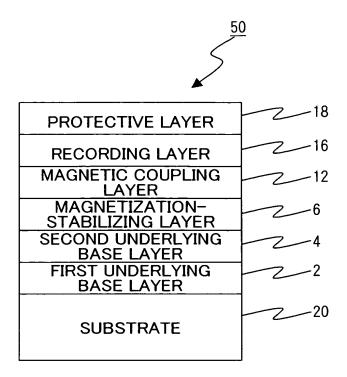


Fig. 8

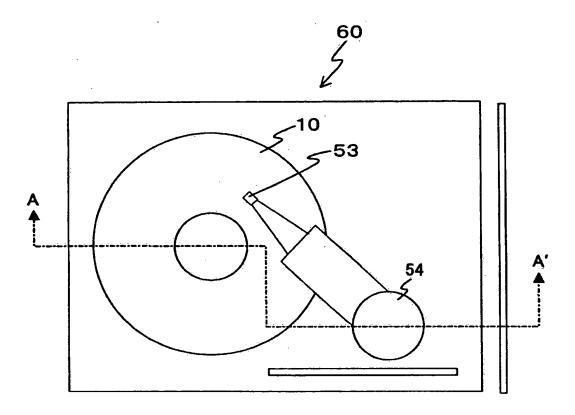


Fig. 9

